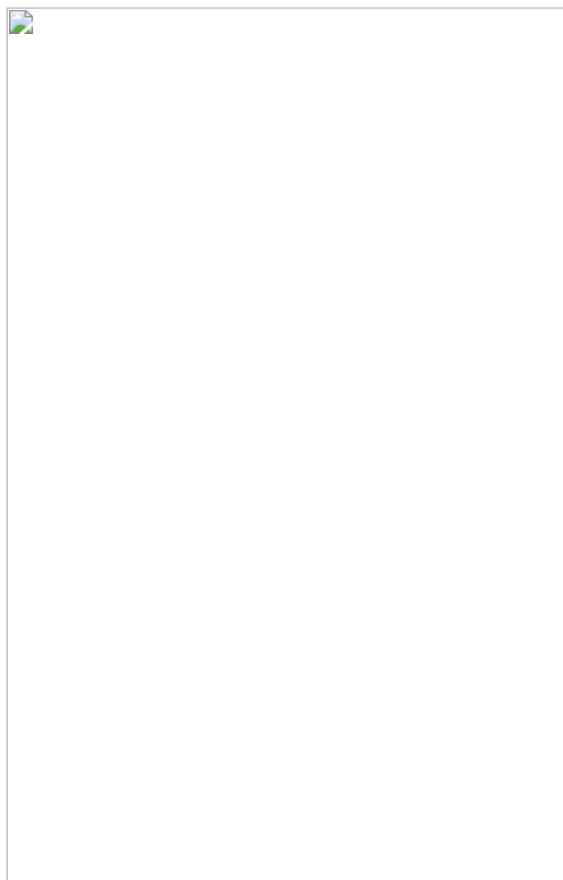


## The Carib

Carib or Island Carib is the name of a people of the Lesser Antilles islands, after whom the Caribbean Sea was named; their name for themselves was Kalinago for men and Kallipuna for women. They are an Amerindian people whose origins lie in the southern West Indies and the northern coast of South America. They spoke an Arawakan language, although the men either spoke a Carib language or a pidgin. In the southern Caribbean they co-existed with a related Cariban-speaking group, the Galibi who lived in separate villages in Grenada and Tobago and are believed to have been mainland Caribs.

Carib people are believed to have left the Orinoco rainforests of Venezuela in South America to settle in the Caribbean. Over the century leading up to Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean archipelago in 1492, the Caribs are believed to have displaced the Arawakan-speaking Igneri people from the southern Lesser Antilles. Their legends (as recorded by Fr. Breton in the seventeenth century) say that they killed (and ate) all the Igneri men and took their women as wives. Anthropologists are divided as to how true these legends are, but the fact that the Island Carib women spoke an Arawakan language gives credence to this idea. The island also raided and traded with the Eastern Taino of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The Caribs were the source of the gold which Columbus found in the possession of the Taino; gold was not smelted by any of the insular Amerindians, but rather was obtained by trade from the mainland. The Caribs were skilled boatbuilders and sailors, and seem to have owed their dominance in the Caribbean basin to their mastery of the arts of war.



The Caribs were themselves displaced by the Europeans, and were eventually all but exterminated during the colonial period. However they were able to retain some islands, such as Dominica, St. Vincent, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad. The Black Caribs (Garifuna) of St. Vincent who had mixed with black slaves from a 1675 shipwreck were deported in 1795 to Roatan Island, off Honduras, where their descendants, the Garifuna, still live today. The British saw the less mixed "Yellow Caribs" as less hostile, and allowed them to remain in St. Vincent. Carib resistance delayed the settlement of Dominica by Europeans, and a few thousand of them still remain there. The last known speakers of Island Carib died in the 1920s.

Europeans arriving on the Caribbean Islands in the 16th century remarked on the Caribs' aggressive and warlike ways and apparent taste for combat.

Carib culture looking from the outside seems to be heavily patriarchal. Women, who carried out primarily domestic duties and farming and in the seventeenth century they lived in separate houses, a custom which also suggests South American origin. However women were highly revered, and held

much power. Island Carib society was more egalitarian than Taino society. Although there were village chiefs and war leaders, there were no large states or multi-tiered aristocracy.

Instances of cannibalism were noted as a feature of religious war rituals, and in fact, the English word cannibal comes from the Spanish canibal, itself taken from the Carib karibna ('person') as recorded by Columbus. Claims of cannibalism, however, must be seen in light of the fact that in 1503, Queen Isabella ruled that only cannibals could be legally taken as slaves, which gave Europeans an incentive to identify various Amerindian groups as cannibals. To this day the Kalinago people fight against the misconception of cannibalism.

Some common words in use in English originate in the Carib language, such as "hammock", "iguana", "hurricane" (after the Carib god of evil), and "maize."

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